

TACOMA Newsletter

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The True North II



Tunarama



Kyle Chambers at the tuna poling statue.

MFV Tacoma treats the adventure touring vessel True North II guests to a Tuna Showcase on the 20th of January.

Twenty guests aboard the visiting luxury adventure tourism vessel True North II enjoyed a unique Port Lincoln experience.

Tacoma welcomed passengers and crew onboard in Spalding Cove as part of True North II's overnight visit to the city.

TPS Media Coordinator Ian Doyle said the society was honoured to be given the opportunity to showcase tuna, talk about the history of the tuna industry, tell the story of the MFV Tacoma and highlight Matthew Flinders' visit to Spalding Cove in late February and early March 1802.

A poling demonstration was staged, and a couple of passengers from True North II happily donned full poling gear, got into the rack and successfully poled Tacoma's ten-kilo demonstration tuna "Tina" aboard.

The Fresh Fish Place filleter Simon Baldwin showed the skill and precision required to prepare a wild-caught Tacoma tuna as guests enjoyed sampling his freshly carved sashimi. Also on offer was hot and cold smoked Tacoma poled tuna produced by the Port Lincoln Smokehouse, and bottled tuna in olive oil. A reading of excerpts from Matthew Flinders' diary by former Channel Seven newsreader and TPS member Jane Doyle was followed by a Matthew Flinders' adventure, with a volunteer crew using a Flinders' map to take a tender boat to shore in search for water, as an Investigator crew had done in 1802.

Blessing of the Fleet at this year's Tunarama Festival

The Tunarama is back again as a spectacular event. A "Blessing of the Fleet" ceremony was held on Friday, 16th January at 4 pm at Lincoln Cove Marina with many invited guests.

Port Lincoln mayor, Diana Mislov, spoke about her fiancé who was lost at sea. Unfortunately, he is just one of the many fishermen honoured on the Fishermen's Memorial.



Little Tacoma in the water.

Garry Emms — Tacoma Life Member

Garry Emms was never a ship passing in the night - he was a loyal shipmate. Most of his life he rode on rubber tyres as he bussed and trucked Australia's distant tracks. The Tacoma crew had the friendship of traveling with Garry aboard. Long nights of peering into the dark were always shorter listening to one of Garry's long stories, and when he could no longer go to sea, visitors who came aboard while moored alongside heard the stories again with water under our keel instead of a dusty road, Garry joined in on every opportunity to be afloat until old age and health restricted him to onboard visits. Garry, your last journey will be aboard Tacoma when, as per your wishes, we scatter your ashes off the back deck at sea.

April 12 – all members and friends are invited. Depart dock at 10.30 pm. Bring a shared lunch. Tacoma will be back at the marina 3.30 pm.



Festival coordinator Naomi Blacker said the return of the “Blessing of the Fleet” was important to acknowledge the importance of the Port Lincoln fishing industry. Tacoma provided the centrepiece of the fishing fleet moored at the service wharf with two prawn trawlers. After the ceremony, the Tacoma was opened to visitors. Carin Haldane greeted the Olympic swimmer Kyle Chambers and his lovely wife. Kyle was the ambassador for the Tunarama Festival. Carin did not immediately recognise him, and when introducing him, she politely asked, ‘So, you are the minister of?’ One of the crew came to her help and said, ‘He’s the minister of swimming, you know, Kyle Chambers.’ Oh, dear — what a “faux pas”! But Kyle was generous enough to laugh and even suggested that it was nice not to have someone recognise him for a change. Still suffering from the first embarrassment, she added another one. Carin told the crew, ‘How was I supposed to recognise him with his clothes on?’ But quickly added: ‘I’ve only ever seen him in his bathers!’ In addition to the Blessing of the Fleet, Tacoma’s flatty, with an add-on deck house, was once more wheeled out to do its trip down Tasman Terrace in the Parade.

Tuna Trips — Captain’s Report

TRIP 1 - Ladies. When the wind blows, there is no better place to drop anchor than in Spaulding Cove. No matter the wind direction, good shelter can be found, and so it was with our first ladies’ trip. With a sufficient supply of great food and with Anastasia, Shell Manning and the coke-burning AGA stove, a great weekend was had aboard despite landing no tuna. Better luck next year! If the weather gods are not with you, a cozy bunk and splendid company are essential.

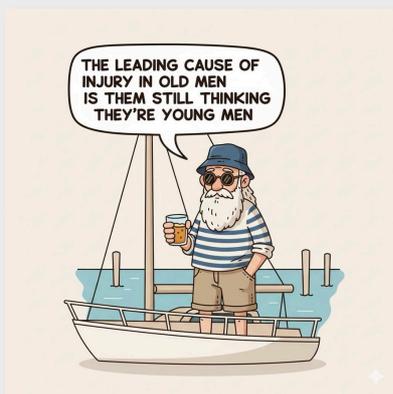
TRIP 2 - Men. It all started so well... Two weather windows preceded the first day and the last. Neptune Island was worth a look; the birds were there; the sardines were there, but no fish. So, it was off to Thistle Island for a drone shot and another night at Taylor Island. A two-day wait and off to the Cabbage Patch to be greeted by just a few birds but no fish. So, back to the Neptunes and more birds, but again with no fish - perhaps next year.

Garry Kerr swallow his anchor



Garry Kerr is a Portland-based cray fisherman, historian, and maritime documentarian. Over the years Garry has recorded oral histories of seafaring phenomena from subjects as vast as the Huon Pine trade out of the West Coast of Tasmania, to the resurgence of the Couta Boat on Victoria's south coast and to "Those were the Days," a documentary capturing the early days of the tuna fishery. The common thread in these stories is one of grit and survival.

He writes: There is an old nautical tradition of the sea that says a man (person) who retires from the sea has 'swallowed the anchor.' This morning I steered the boat around the fleet of 50 pots (while Matt and Reece did the work) for the last time. At age 80, it is time to give the game away - some would say 'high time'. Let's face it, I've been three-parts retired for a while now. I have had an extremely good innings. I'll leave the fishing in the capable hands of Matt.



TRIP 3 - Ladies. The Cabbage Patch and possibly a visit to the fleet on the shelf. After a long day of nothing and a flyover of the spotter plane to confirm nothing, we licked our wounds and settled for a sheltered anchorage. More onboard activities, a visit to Taylor Island, a bobbing hour in a life raft, followed by a trip the next day to the Neptunes, then back to Thistle Island and finally the mandatory bubble bath in the fish bin. And once again, no fish.

TRIP 4 - Men. Now things were getting serious — we had to catch fish! So, it was off to the shelf where the commercial fleet guaranteed fish; 100 miles due south of Port Lincoln, 60 miles west of Kangaroo Island. Being a dull day, we lost the fleet but finally found them 20 miles off the shelf. It felt like at last we could return to port with fish, but by 3:30 pm, the deck remained blood-free. Then the Marie Louise was kind enough to pass over their school hungry fish, and it was on. With heavy rain falling and hungry fish in the water, we poled and quickly filled our slurry bins with nice 14 kg fish. 40 fish proved to be just enough to gill and gut, tag and ice. The upside of the torrential rain was that no scrubbing was needed to clean the boat up, and so we eventually anchored up early in the morning at Taylor Island. We unloaded in Port Lincoln the next day and then headed out to the St Josephs Group of islands for a well-deserved rest.

Tuna Trips — Crew Report

View from the Deck by ex-Capt. Pugwash and Leading Seaman Staines (Capt. Pugwash is a nom-de-plume).

Ahoy me hearties. It's been a very busy few weeks for us poor suffering deckhands, a constant stream of loading ice and bait, but thankfully, not much unloading. The tuna have been conspicuous by their absence on the back deck and only a trip close to the South Pole (one of the crew swore he sighted it)

Tuna Trips



Crew of the Month

Each month there is a scramble to see who is awarded crew of the month. The award is not always handed out to the person who has fixed up the most things in the engine room or the galley or turned bits of wood into something useful, but it goes to someone whose effort has gone above normal. This edition of the newsletter has identified several candidates for crew of the month.

David "Sleepy" Raleigh is the stand out – not only has he been able to tie a perfect figure of eight in the Southern Ocean showing his rope skills, but he has been recorded at night coping with snoring to the volume of a noisy engine, thus enabling the sleeping of others.



There were rumours that one skipper onboard had a meltdown and did his best impression of a two-headed Croatian, almost fomenting a mutiny, but the less said the better.

Even though the trips were largely uneventful filtered through, everyone on all the trips had a great time, certain punters had too good a time but what happens at sea stays at sea, and if certain people were to bribe us, we will stay strum. All that is left is to congratulate everyone who contributed, from the bed washers to the cooks, stores people and crew. You're all part of what makes the Tacoma such a successful and enjoyable project.

Cheers me hearties

The Port Lincoln Tuna Competition 2026

This year's comp was always going to be different with a report of low tuna numbers in the inshore fishing grounds. Just finding fish was a challenge, but with 35 boat surly someone would get lucky.

Tacoma's role in the competition is to act as the start boat; that's an 8:00 am shotgun start, quite a spectacle. Tacoma then steams to a location to provide shelter for the fleet overnight. Fishing finishing at 5:00 pm with a rush to return to the overnight anchorage to fill up fuel from a fuel barge for the next day's fishing. Then to join fellow fishers on the rear deck of Tacoma for a bragging session on who caught what and where. This year's conversations were a little subdued, with only 29 fish caught and half the fleet recording a zero. The fish may not have been hungry, but the competitors were, with some 300 meatballs quickly devoured. The anchorage for the last two years has been Taylor Island. This is the best anchorage apart from the noisy colony of little penguins who chattered all night, not sure if they are bragging about all the fish they have caught. When the fleet departed at dawn, Tacoma left to slowly return to Port Lincoln, towing one competitor back. Their engine had blown near William's Island. The police boat dropped the boat off to us at Taylor's Island.

The results of the comp were 40 fish, and the winning boat for the biggest fish received a prize of \$140000. All-in-all a good weekend — for the winners!

